



WILLIAM M. BENNETT
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
COUNTY OF HAMPDEN
HALL OF JUSTICE

50 STATE STREET
SPRINGFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS 01102-0559

SUPERIOR COURT OFFICE
TEL: 413-747-1000
FAX: 413-781-4745

SPRINGFIELD DISTRICT COURT OFFICE
TEL: 413-747-1001
FAX: 413-747-5628

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Press Release
October 5, 2007

East Longmeadow Fire Chief Robert Wallace announced today that officials have concluded their investigation into the cause of the fire that destroyed the Bluebird Acres Retirement Living Complex. "The fire was intentionally set using several gallons of gasoline that were poured throughout the building and then ignited," said Chief Wallace. "This was a criminal act that has caused millions of dollars in damage," he added.

State Fire Marshal Stephen D. Coan praised the multi-jurisdictional team that responded to the blaze. "This investigation should serve as a model for future large scale fire investigations," said Coan. "Local, State and Federal agencies worked together in a laborious and painstaking examination of a massive scene. Led by Trooper Michael Mazza, a widely respected fire investigator, this team not only determined the cause of this fire, but recovered critical evidence that proves conclusively this fire was a criminal act," added Coan.

The team, led by the State Police Fire and Explosion Unit attached to the State Fire Marshal's Office, included investigators from the East Longmeadow Police and Fire Departments, the Springfield Fire Department's Arson and Bomb Squad, the State Police Crime Scene Services Unit, the State Police Collision Analysis and Reconstruction Section, and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

Trooper Michael Mazza detailed the findings of the investigation, which included the recovery of three red plastic gasoline containers that were used to commit the crime. In addition specially trained accelerant detection canines were used to locate debris for laboratory analysis. The State Crime Lab has confirmed the presence of gasoline in samples taken from several locations throughout the complex.

Trooper Mazza expressed appreciation for the assistance provided by Todd Jordan, an employee of Marion Excavating of South Hadley, who played a critical role in uncovering the fire scene and locating the remnants of gasoline containers.

District Attorney William M. Bennett called for the public's help in determining who set the blaze which destroyed the complex. "We need the public's help to determine when and where these containers were purchased and filled with gasoline," said District Attorney Bennett. "We are asking employees of area gas stations and other businesses that sell these type of containers to contact us to report any such purchases that took place shortly before the fire which was set late in the evening on Wednesday, September 26.

Anyone with information is urged to call the Massachusetts Arson Hotline at 1-800-682-9229. The Arson Hotline is part of the Arson Watch Reward Program, which offers rewards of up to \$5,000 for information that leads to solving arson cases. The Arson Watch Reward Program is sponsored by the property and casualty underwriting companies in Massachusetts. The public may also call the East Longmeadow Police Department at (413) 525-5440.